

Right2Vote Report

YEAR OF JUBILEE

1,123 subscriptions in 242 facilities across 30 states

ISSUE XIII: MAY, 2020

Letter from the Editor

Brothers and Sisters!

More than anything right now I'm eager and excited for what is to come. In the midst of panic, peace is distributed to those who are faithful to the vision. We have a powerful collective vision and I hope that this newsletter brings each reader some sense of peace. In these difficult times, remind yourself that crisis creates opportunity and that is the theme of this season's report. I also invite you to pray and meditate on Psalm 7 with me.

About a month before Michigan's "Stay home, Stay safe" order went into effect my partner in the struggle, Sincere Crown, pleaded with me that "something has to break" in order for real change to transform corrections departments, especially in Michigan. Not too long after that call, the coronavirus pandemic reached the United States. On Friday, March 13th while getting ready to visit Sincere, I got a call from my ride that visits were being banned "until further notice" due to Coronavirus. This was a call that I'm sure broke hundreds of thousands of hearts across the country on both sides of the wall. The seemingly senseless 'precaution' for some still didn't stop the spread of the virus. Numbers exploded and rapidly grew from 3 officers at 2 facilities to over 1,623 cases across 30 facilities just six weeks later.

Michigan isn't unique, the number of coronavirus cases is disproportionately impacting people in prison at a much higher rate. In response to the crisis, people all over the country have been able to use this moment of uncertainty to advocate for overdue sentencing solutions that many were otherwise too distracted to uncover. Along with updates from one of the epicenters of the prison pandemic, you will also find resources for people in prison during the coronavirus crisis.

We understand that people in prison are also in need of financial support, with many families struggling during this economic crisis so we have researched different ways that people in prison could get access to stimulus money. Please consider whether you are eligible to benefit from the Coronavirus Stimulus Package and whether it would have a positive impact on you. Across the country, people are advocating for and expecting releases in response to Covid-19 and a stimulus check could help many individuals preparing for their transition back into society.

In Solidarity,
Amani Sawari
@Sawarimi

We've Got You Covered



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MOVEMENT MOVES

PEOPLE | POSITIONS | POWER

JLS National Prison Strike Calls Cover Corona



by Amani Sawari February 11, 2020 | www.sawarimi.org

Before the conditions of the word crumbled; when people were allowed to gather, rally and protest; prisoners around the world shifted the mass consciousness away from any last remaining tendencies from the “tough-on-crime” era. A spotlight beamed into the darkest corners of society as people in prison in seventeen states refused to work in the positions assigned to them or eat the food served to them from August 21, 2018 through September 9th. Prisoners unified in order to amplify ten demands with the hopes of transformative change that would impact the criminal legal system, before it burst at the seams.

With with a national health crisis creeping into every corner of society, even the dark ones, the prison bubble is rapidly boiling over. Had we immediately applied those National Prison Strike demands when they were promoted in 2018, it's hard to imagine that we would be our current health crisis situation that places tens of thousands of incarcerated people's lives at risk. The cramped, overcrowded conditions of a prison where people are housed on top of one another, cross contamination is prevalent and people are not given regular opportunities to clean themselves or their property is a breeding ground for illness and disease. As the spokesperson for the National Prison Strike, I can't help but wonder if now Corona is what it takes for people to listen.

Bringing the Person into Focus, by Eliminating State Profit on Labor

We begin with a call for Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women. With policies allowing for humans to be warehoused, packed less a few three feet apart in a gym or lobby to accommodate extra bodies, the pandemic amplifies the need for this demand to be addressed. Over the past few weeks organizers have called for Corrections departments to reduce the amount of people confined to their ‘care’ and give

prisoners free access to cleaning products, soaps, preventative supplies, hand sanitizer and other items that would provide relief while decreasing the potential for a nasty spread.

Rather than being provided with these products, people in prison have been staffed to fill in the gaps of labor created by the social distancing orders on the outside. In several states prison labor has been used to craft masks (South Carolina & Texas), bottle hand sanitizer (New York) and sew hospital gowns (Washington). Prisoners, unable to practice social distancing, are working for free (and for pennies an hour like in GA) which is why prisoners called for an immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor. In order to combat this legislation has been introduced in multiple states to raise the wage of people working in prison to be equal to minimum wages for people on the outside. Without these types of laws in place we will continue to see corrections demonstrate profits over people, instead of valuing people over potential profits.

Making Rehabilitation Essential in Corrections by Eliminating Overcrowding

As a result of the Coronavirus crisis every prison has responded by stopping the flow of “nonessential” personnel this includes ending visitation stopping people from seeing their loved ones, ending programming by restricting outside volunteers from coming in and most devastatingly, suspending staff positions that are labeled “nonessential”. During the crisis the Ombudsman, a non biased office that addresses prisoners concerns of abuse, has not been qualified as essential staff and as a result is not admitted to enter the prison facility during the crisis. In times of crisis correction's grips onto punitive methods, further punishing people in situations for which they have no control. This normalized path of abuse and silencing of people's voices while in prison is why the Prison Litigation Reform Act must be rescinded, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights. This further exasperates the problem that people in prison face when attempting to have their concerns addressed.

Our corrections department functions as if there is no room for growth or development, when these should be the focus of the department's mission. This problem is incited by policies like Truth in Sentencing (TIS) laws and the Sentencing Reform Act that mandate minimums and contribute to massive overcrowding nationwide. The Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act must be rescinded so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole. The prevalence of death by incarceration is an indication of massive failure within our “corrections” department. In the few states where TIS laws are still active, like Michigan, it is the main cause for overcrowding. TIS laws to not account for the individual process of rehabilitation that each person goes through.

According to a February 2020 report by the Sentencing Project, the number of people serving life sentences in the United States exceeds the entire prison population of 1970! An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and brown humans

Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in southern states. A portion of this issue is exasperated by the racist sentencing guidelines that include gang enhancement laws. People around the world argued against this injustice by calling for, An immediate end to racist gang enhancement

laws targeting Black and brown humans. As a result of these types of inflated sentences, we see a devastating impact on the smaller urban communities where the majority of prisoners are from, like how we've seen on death row in Colorado.

Embrace Rehabilitation in Funding Robust Education for those who Remain

During the crisis many people in prison have been forced into a higher level of security. Lockdowns, decreased movement, restrictions on outside visitors and refused entry to those labeled as non-essential staff. This devastates prisoners' ability to take advantage of rehabilitative programming as many prisoner educators are not considered "essential" personnel. The health crisis has created another barrier to incarcerated people's education. This joins restrictions on those considered violent offenders, lifers and people more than a few years from their outdate. These restrictions are another symptom of overcrowding, but they also work to continue to limit an educationally deprived population from academic access.

No imprisoned human shall be denied access to rehabilitation programs at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender or because of the amount of time left on their sentence, their privilege status, age, religion or political affiliation. Without free access to a diverse range of educational rehabilitative programming in prison we are continuing a cycle of poverty that maintains a high recidivism rate. For example, in Colorado where every single death row prisoner is a black male from the same high school we can see the public school to prison pipeline at play. Public schools, underfunded by the state are usually stifled of funding that could be allocated towards music, arts, or advanced elective classes that would keep students engaged and interested in higher education. We must force officials to break the cycle somewhere, why not in prison?

This trend continues for students who (through a combination of factors) are swept up by the state from the class room into a prison cell. In an attempt to break the cycle of lackluster learning opportunities prisoners demand that the state appropriate funds to address this critical need, State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services. As the state adds more robust and engaging learning opportunities into its institutions, there will naturally be more of an interest (among students in public schools and people in prison) to take advantage of higher education opportunities.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of people in prison, even when interested, cannot afford to take college courses, purchase text books, or have access to online courses. Prisoners who use their incarceration to obtain a higher level of education drastically lower the chances of recidivism. This is why Jailhouse Lawyers Speak recommended that Pell grants must be reinstated in all US states and territories because when the state funds a degree or certificate it drastically reduces the number of years that taxpayers would have continued to pay for that same person to sit in prison.

Let them Go or Let them Vote

The destitute conditions of our states' prisons can be attributed to a lack of influence on public policy by impacted people. When people are unable to vote during or after their incarceration, our democracy fails to serve the gaps that are created by a system that distances itself from millions of its own citizens. In order to reduce this gap between people and their government both sides of the wall call for, The voting rights of all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees, and so-called "ex-felons" must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count.

Restoring voting rights to impacted people would create an avenue for resolution, but only for a government that is committed to the health of all of its people on both sides of the wall. Officials that would allow millions of its citizens to suffer the fate of death by incarcerated due to its own policy failures must be pressured by the public in order for us to see the aggressive changes that we need to see during the slim window that we have as we approach the climax of the crisis these unprecedented times.

Coronavirus Resources

In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the Right2Vote Campaign and other related projects, SawariMedia collaborates with organizers across the country on criminal justice reform initiatives and projects to protect the human rights of people in prison. During the current pandemic people in prison struggle to get access to the products they need to be stay healthy and keep themselves safe from the coronavirus. In an effort to combat this we've consolidated the following resources.

Prisoner Legal Action Network (PLAN)

Amani Sawari works as apart of the Midwestern PLAN teams serving Michigan and Illinois. Please initiate your legal relationship with PLAN by submitting the form: [LEGAL OBSERVER AFFIDAVITS AFFORD PRISONERS A WAY TO DOCUMENT RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT](#) to National Lawyers Guild 132 Nassau St. Room 922, New York, NY 10038

Michigan Department of Attorney General Conviction Integrity Unit

Mission: Investigates claims of innocence to determine whether there is clear and convincing new evidence that the convicted defendant was not the person who committed the conviction offense.

Contact: Antonia Giles

3030 W. Grand Blvd. Ste. 10-200

Detroit, MI 48202

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs

Mission: We fight discrimination against all people, but we put special focus on the central role that current and historic race discrimination plays in sustaining inequity.

700 14th St. NW, Ste 400

Washington, D.C. 20005

Michigan Coronavirus Care Packs established with the support of the Detroit Justice Center, the Good Time Campaign to Repeal TIS, SawariMedia LLC and individual donors in order to assist with the purchase of items that would reduce the spread of coronavirus on the inside. Requests can be submitted online at <https://forms.gle/gSd7xvEftaxe7brN8>

Black and Pink organized Mutual Aid for Massachusetts Prisoners for Covid-19 by sending \$10 to each Black and Pink -Boston, and Deeper Than Water member. This will provide the resources for people locked up in MA to purchase necessary items to protect against COVID-19. Contact Organizer Katie Omberg
6223 Maple St #4428
Omaha, NE 681043

Solidarity Watch is compiling firsthand accounts prisoners and their families about how prisons, jails, and detention centers across the country are dealing with the virus. Keep in mind that they are mostly publishing anonymously on social media with the tag #COVID19behindbars (unless you or your LO would like to be identified or have the facility identified). Those with stories to share can contact Valerie via text/call at 202.582.9594 or email valerie@solitarywatch.org

Please be aware that in the event of a medical emergency corrections staff are not authorised to release a prisoner's health status or report a medical incident to their family, even if a concerned family member calls to request such information. You can avoid this problem by completing an **AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION** form with your state corrections department.

SawariMedia accepts contributions from people in prison in the form of stamps, articles, artwork and poetry. We partner with organizers to amplify your voices, empowering grassroots organizing networks across the country. This publication and its campaign are about you and our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. For readers interested in submitting: handwritten or typed can be sent to P.O. Box 2278, Detroit, MI 48202 or emailed to: amanisawari@gmail.com Please also write your return address directly onto the body of your letter or back of your artwork submission. Information is no longer privileged once it is sent to SawariMedia LLC. Privileged evidence should be sent directly to the National Lawyers Guild at 132 Nassau St. Room 922, New York, NY 10038

ISSUEVOTER

IssueVoter is a nonpartisan organization with a mission to give everyone a voice in our democracy. **IssueVoter** is working with **Right2Vote** to highlight four pieces of outstanding legislation in Congress and we *encourage you to send your opinion on any or all of these to your representative*. You may write to your representative at the address on the following page, and let them know which issues you care about and how you would like them to vote on these bills. Every constituent contact is counted by each representative's staff, no matter whether it is received by mail or phone. *Please make your voice heard!*

Should formerly incarcerated people be able to vote in federal elections?

Introduced > Passed House > Passed Senate > Resolving Differences > To President > Became Law

≡ Democracy Restoration Act of 2019 (H.R. 196)

Referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties

This bill addresses the voting rights of persons convicted of a criminal offense and the restoration of their voting rights. The bill declares that the right of a U.S. citizen to vote in any election for federal office shall not be denied or abridged because that individual has been convicted of a criminal offense unless, at the time of the election, such individual is serving a felony sentence. This bill would restore federal voting rights to people released from prison.

Sponsor: Rep. Jerrold Nadler (Democrat, New York, District 10)

Should certain criminal arrest records be sealed from the public?

Introduced > Passed House > Passed Senate > Resolving Differences > To President > Became Law

≡ Clean Slate Act of 2019 (H.R. 2348)

Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

This bill would automatically seal criminal records for certain arrests and nonviolent offenses. Criminal records would be sealed one year after the person completes every requirement of their sentence.

Sponsor: Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester (Democrat, Delaware, At-Large)

Should inmates be allowed a shortened or reconsidered sentence?

Introduced > Passed House > Passed Senate > Resolving Differences > To President > Became Law

≡ Second Look Act of 2019 (H.R. 3795)

Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

This bill allows for a reconsideration of an inmate's sentence based on certain qualifications. Those include a sentence longer than 10 years, length served no less than 10 years, if the inmate is no longer a threat to any person, and if the inmate demonstrates the ability to reenter the greater community successfully. Additional factors to be considered include the nature of the offense, the age at the time of the offense, details of juvenile cases, victim statements, and mental/physical examinations. Finally, there is a requirement of the US Sentencing Commission to submit an annual report to the Judiciary Committees of the House and the Senate detailing the amount of reductions and information about each case.

Sponsor: Rep. Karen Bass (Democrat, California, District 37)

Should inmates be allowed a shortened or reconsidered sentence?

Introduced > Passed House > Passed Senate > Resolving Differences > To President > Became Law

≡ Justice Safety Valve Act of 2019 (H.R. 1097)

Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

HR 1097 allows for the courts to impose a sentence below the minimum mandatory sentence. This would only be done if the court found sufficient evidence that the mandatory minimum is longer than necessary.

Sponsor: Rep. Robert Scott (Democrat, Virginia, District 3)

Federal prisons make inmate calling, video visits free during pandemic

 4/14/2020 from POLITICO - Written by John Hendel

Sen. Amy Klobuchar had led a dozen senators in raising the issue of exorbitantly high costs phone carriers charge to prison inmates.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is making calling and video visitation free for inmates after the coronavirus forced a halt to in-person visits, the agency said in a letter to Congress obtained by POLITICO.

"Effective April 9, 2020, telephone calls were made free for the inmate population," bureau Director Michael Carvajal wrote in the letter dated Friday to Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), who had led a dozen senators in raising the issue of the exorbitantly high costs that phone carriers charge to prison inmates. The bureau oversees 122 prisons throughout the U.S.

"Video-visiting, which is available to our female population, was also made free on that same date," Carvajal added. He also described efforts to allow inmates to confidentially communicate with legal counsel outside of the view of prison staff.

Inmate advocates for years have decried the costs that prisoners and their families pay for phone calls, concerns aggravated as prisons in recent weeks ended in-person social and legal visitation.

Last month's \$2.2 trillion relief package from Congress included language, with the Justice Department's blessing, allowing the bureau to make such communication services free for inmates if emergency conditions materially affect operations. Carvajal's letter confirmed that it had done so.

Klobuchar had joined senators including Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) in pressing the bureau on the issue last week.

"Studies have demonstrated family contact is a valuable source of support during incarceration and that those who maintain contact with their family experience lower rates of recidivism after release," the senators wrote in an earlier letter last month, noting that "inmates are still required to pay as much as 25 cents per minute in addition to fees charged each call."

Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) has separately urged the bureau to make prison phone calls free.

Should formerly incarcerated people be able to vote in federal elections?

Introduced > Passed House > Passed Senate > Resolving Differences > To President > Became Law

 **COVID-19 Correctional Facility Emergency Response Act of 2020 (H.R. 6414)**

This bill provides funding for correctional facilities to test, treat, and provide additional services for inmates during coronavirus.

Sponsor: Rep. Jerrold Nadler (Democrat, New York, District 10)

Opponents say

There is no publicly stated opposition to this bill at the time of printing.

Proponents say

"Congress must do all we can to assist state and local governments as they combat this disease. That includes allocating funds to provide testing and treatment for COVID-19 in correctional facilities. On top of that, those who are highly susceptible to COVID-19 like pregnant women, people over age 55, or those with serious chronic medical condition who pose a low risk to the public should be immediately released to home confinement. This is a matter of public health..."

- **Rep. Karen Bass (Democrat, California, District 37)**

Instructions for Those Who've Mistakenly Received a Stimulus Check

You can't get a check if you've been convicted but you can if you haven't

Source: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center#more>

Q.41: What Should I do to return an economic impact payment (EIP)? (updated May 11, 2020)

If the payment was a paper check:

1. Write "Void" in the endorsement section on the back of the check.
2. Mail the voided Treasury check immediately to the appropriate IRS location listed below.
3. Don't staple, bend, or paper clip the check.
4. Include a note stating the reason for returning the check.

If the payment was a paper check and you have cashed it, or if the payment was a direct deposit:

1. Submit a personal check, money order, etc., immediately to the appropriate IRS location listed below.
2. Write on the check/money order made payable to "U.S. Treasury" and write 2020EIP, and the taxpayer identification number (social security number, or individual taxpayer identification number) of the recipient of the check.
3. Include a brief explanation of the reason for returning the EIP.

An example brief explanation to include with the return:

Due to my incarceration I am no longer eligible to receive an economic impact payment according to the IRS' recently updated decision.

While the vast majority of incarcerated citizens are no longer eligible to receive an economic impact payment there is a small minority who are still eligible, these include pre-trial detainees. Please make sure to check your individual availability.

If you or your family has questions about economic impact payments for themselves or an incarcerated loved one please come to one of our zoom sessions

Thursdays at 5:00p from May 28th - July 9th

Join Online <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83740219311>

Meeting ID: 864 1801 8257

prison is no place for a pandemic.
governor whitmer & director washington,
are you listening?



From The Inside Out:

STRENGTHENING YOUR
POLITICAL POWER WHILE IN
ISOLATION



What: Virtual Workshop

Where: Zoom

When: Tuesday, May 19
5:30 - 7:30pm

**Featuring Amani Sawari, human rights activist
and organizer.**

Register online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1505900359584490/>

MAY 2020 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6 MEMBER MEETING	7 FTV Q & A PANEL	8	9
10 MEDITATION & REFLECTION 10:00 AM	11	12 ✓ JOURNALING 6:30 PM	13 LEGAL ADVOCACY	14 FTV SOCIAL MEDIA BLAST	15	16
17	18 ✓ HEALING 5:00 PM	19	20 PROGRAMMING & CREDITS	21	22 ✓ OUTREACH 6:00 PM	23
24	25	26 ✓ ADVOCACY 7:00 PM	27 FREE THE VOTE	28 ✓ MEMBERSHIP 6:30 PM	29 ✓ INSIDE 6:30 PM	30

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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE INDICATED ON THEIR OWN DATE
FTV = FREE THE VOTE

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Why People in Prison SHOULD Receive Stimulus Money



by Amani Sawari May 11, 2020 | www.sawarimi.org

Weeks after passing the stimulus package, the IRS made a recent determination that convicted, incarcerated people are not eligible to receive stimulus money. This is extremely disheartening for me as a prisoner human rights advocate and community organizer because after seeing that incarcerated people were not written out of the legislation I was excited to look for ways to organize my community around making sure that imprisoned people got access to the support needed for them to stay safe and to stop the spread of the coronavirus in prisons where the number of cases has been rapidly growing.

While I worked with a team of organizers across the country to put together materials to distribute to incarcerated people instructing them on methods to use in order to have access to stimulus funding, it seems like public officials were doing the opposite. Not long after investing time, money and energy into putting together these materials; just before they were going to be sent to my incarcerated subscribers of the Right2Vote Report; the IRS released their determination that there were three categories of folks who could no longer receive stimulus support. Those groups included: the deceased, the undocumented and the incarcerated.

I'm writing this article to vent my frustration as well as to list reasons why incarcerated people should receive stimulus money in the hopes that advocates will voice their concern to officials as to why incarcerated people aren't receiving the support that they desperately need during this crisis. If stimulus money is a pool of funding exclusively allocated towards providing relief to those suffering as a result of an unprecedented health crisis, why are incarcerated citizens purposefully being left to die?

People in prison more than qualify as individuals in desperate need of relief, we've already seen numbers of coronavirus cases in prison shoot up into the thousands over the past couple months due to the corrections department failure to properly manage the populations that they are responsible for protecting. We all know that it is virtually impossible for people in prison to practice social distancing or many of the recommendations promoted by the CDC and that this is solely due to overcrowded, under-sanitized facilities that we've built in mass across the country.

Another purpose of stimulus money is to boost the economy. For some reason many fail to see the essential role that people in prison play in America's economic structure. Slaves, which include prisoners according to the 13th amendment of the constitution, have been a critical thread in the American fabric since the country's inception. We can see how valuable incarcerated members of our economy are as we've turned to their labor forces in the height of the Coronavirus crisis: recruited to make masks, bottle hand sanitizer and sew together hospital gowns. The state New York went as far as placing inmates onto

Hart Island to manage the masses of infected bodies shipped there for incineration. Public outrage pushed the state to replace inmates with contracted workers. Why hasn't public outrage expanded to fully protect prisoners from dying themselves?

My hope is that this publication can reverse that trend. People in prison need access to hygiene products, medications and cleaning supplies just as much as we do on the outside, but these all come at an exorbitant cost when being paid pennies an hour. People in prison need access to stimulus money, just as much as we do on the outside. Knowing how much incarcerated people have been cheated out of wages for decades to do the work that we're desperate to have done for the benefit of public health and our economic vitality, how is it that we could carve them out of receiving stimulus support?

It's true that not all people in prison are employed, but for those incarcerated folks who do not work they depend on their families support to get access to the products they need to pay for: these include money to talk on the phone, soaps, deodorants, commissary foods, winter clothes, and many other items. Their families are forced to foot this bill, many families of whom have increased financial instability as a result of the crisis. Regardless of the source of their income: whether it be employment, family, gambling over games of cards or selling their artwork; people in prison must pay taxes on what they purchase whether it's a bottle of vitamins or a honey bun, they pay taxes on that item...talk about taxation without representation.

Along with that people in prison need to have access to stimulus money because the stimulus money that their loved ones receive is nowhere near enough to also cover supporting the incarcerated person. Revenue streams of support that incarcerated people have depended on, have been disrupted: mothers with incarcerated sons, husbands with incarcerated wives and children with incarcerated parents are finding it even more difficult to continue to support their incarcerated loved one under the pandemic conditions. How is it that we could write over two million people in desperate need of support out of our main pathway for support?

The only way that our federal government can do this, without it being a complete shot in the hearts of all those directly impacted by the recent IRS decision is if they carve out another method for supporting incarcerated people directly during this time. It cannot be left up to the states to manage their incarcerated populations. The federal government needs to come out with specific recommendations or demands that each state must meet in order for their corrections department to adhere to the requirements mandated by the federal government. Those requirements should include: (1) Releasing all individuals who are past their earliest release date (2) Suspending any truth in sentencing laws which contribute to dangerous overcrowded conditions and (3) Releasing all medically frail, vulnerable populations. Simply being incarcerated during this pandemic makes you dangerously more vulnerable to the coronavirus. Incarceration rises the probability of contracting the coronavirus exponentially. In order for officials to show that it is not their intention for millions of people to die in cages from the coronavirus, they must reduce the amount of people who are in prisons, jails and detention centers during this pandemic. If the federal government is willing to be explicit about writing incarcerated people out of stimulus support, then they also need to be explicit about writing incarcerated people into some other form of direct support.

For us to stand by and watch hundreds of people die from close quarters during a viral outbreak is a way of reinstating the death penalty. We are watching death by incarceration take place at unprecedented levels and if that is not our intention, it's our responsibility to call on prison and public officials to do what needs to be done in order to protect people in prison. We can no longer be a people waiting on the sidelines, we are all at home watching and waiting, now we need to be demanding.

KONCENTRATION KAMP KHRONICLES

ANALYSIS | NARRATIVE | POETRY

March Maddness

Written by Vincent Sherrill | March 2020 | WADOC, MCC

This is not a CORONATION
for some old dusty ass monarch
remnant of an oppressive past
and no College team will be Crowned
NCAA Tournament Champions.

This is more like a CORONACH
a dedication poem or psalm
a platinum song
sung by angelic cherubim
as families place gold coins
toll for the boatman
for those who are crossing over
returning home.

May your star burn bright
in Night Skies.
So we will always remember
When the Sun rose to its zenith
reaching its hottest month
in the dead of winter
exposing humankind to a new kind
of ultravirus rays.

And misty sprays that preys
on the old and infirmed
affecting millions across the globe
as it grows and grows and grows
from epidemic to pandemic

As thousands of bodies
go from hot to cold
under the scalpel and microscope
the forensic scientist
sees the killer face to face
whereby they name it
after its likeness...

But isn't the Sun
suppose to bring good times
as it marks the beginning of
spring and summertimes?
Or if your birthday is 3/5/71
and you love Basketball
March madness
a time for fans to lose their minds
sipping on CORONA and Lime

But instead of celebrating
and being together
we are quarantined
and told that Social Distance
is in our best interest
I don't know about you
but I am a social creature
by nature

So...I'm going MAD in MARCH

Canvassing from Home



STEP 1: SIGN ONLINE

We have developed an online petition that you can find at <https://www.mccmi.org/morco-petition>. This is a way for supporters to plug into the campaign from anywhere in the world, please sign and share with your networks. Each signature sends an email to the Gov. requesting that she use executive authority to protect people in prison.

STEP 2: REQUEST PAPER PETITIONS

Although you've signed the online petition, Michigan-registered voters must still sign the official paper petition sheet in order for their signature to be valid for the ballot initiative. You can request petition sheets by clicking the button at the top right-hand corner of <https://www.morco.info/>. You can check your voter status online at <https://myic.sos.state.mi.us/>.



Make sure to check your voter registration status!!



STEP 3: DONATE

You can donate by:

1. Using the button at the top right corner of our webpage
2. Send via PayPal to support@mccmi.org
3. Send via ActBlue to <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/morco>

STEP 4: FOLLOW FOR UPDATES

You can keep up with the campaign by subscribing to our email list using the form at the bottom of <https://www.morco.info>. You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Beesat7324787/>.



STEP 5: ADVOCATE!

Follow the Advocate's Guide at <https://www.mccmi.org/research>, decision makers need to hear your voice!

1. Contact your senator <https://www.senate.michigan.gov/firstwaddress.html>
2. Contact your representative <https://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/firstfindall.aspx>
3. Contact MDOC Dir Heidi Washington, call (517) 335-1426
4. Contact Gov. Whitmer's Office, call 517-335-7858

Prepare Your "Preparer"

Most people in prison are completely unaware that they may qualify to receive a stimulus check from the IRS through the Coronavirus Stimulus Package. This specifically applies to people who have earned wages for work contracted by the prison, a third party, or private company. Stimulus checks are being sent to citizens using the information submitted on their most recent tax returns, but as a person working in prison, you may have never filed a tax return.

Although one's tax return is the main way that citizens are targeted for payment, a large number of people in need (on both sides of the wall) do not file annual tax returns. This includes people who make less than \$12,200 a year who are not required to file taxes. People in prison also meet that requirement.

How can we get stimulus money to the people who need it the most that haven't recently filed taxes? To fix this problem the IRS has created a special online form for "Non-Filers". If you do not have internet access you will need a "Preparer" to file on your behalf which can be a family member or friend. The non-filer form, "EIP 2020 Form 1040", is a simple online portal that you can walk through with your preparer in less than 15 minutes over the phone. Be sure your preparer is someone you trust to handle your information.

Please note that while you may be eligible to receive stimulus funding, depending on your financial status with the prison, it may not be in your best interest to have a stimulus check mailed to you at the facility or mailed to you at all. Depending on an individual prisoner's status, more money may be deducted from your stimulus check than you may expect. For example, indigent prisoners (who could not afford their own stamps, soaps, etc.) would be charged for the products and services they've used throughout their incarceration. Similarly, some individuals have restitution fees to pay, those fees may be deducted by the Department of Corrections from any stimulus monies you are dispersed by the IRS. These types of deductions may also apply to court ordered fines and other payments like child support and can quickly stack up. Before filing make sure to check on if these types of fees, fines, or deductions could impact you.

It is up to you to determine whether completing the non-filers 1040 form would benefit your situation. Knowing that some prisoners would have to pay restitution upon their release, why not get it paid off through this method? For many people in prison who struggle to get support for paying these types of fees, this could be a great way to get them paid off so that accounts can be balanced and reopened.

There are also thousands of people who are advocating for and expecting to be released in response to COVID and stimulus check money can support these individuals greatly in their transition back to society.

For more information or support with filling out the online form instruct your preparer to join us at one of the upcoming sessions using the details below, happening on Thursdays at 5:00p beginning at the end of May through June and July until the new July filing deadline.

Topic: Stimulus Checks for Incarcerated People

Time: Every Thursday at 5:00p

From May 28, 2020 until Jul 9, 2020, 7 occurrence(s)

Join Online <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86418018257>

Meeting ID: 864 1801 8257

Dial by your closest location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York/Michigan)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kdRR8MC6Z6>



INCARCERATED CITIZENS MAY BE ENTITLED TO STIMULUS MONEY

How to get access to your stimulus
money from jail, prison or detention

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

U.S. citizens or resident aliens who:
Haven't filed a 2018 or 2019 return
Have a valid Social Security number,
Could not be claimed as a dependent of another taxpayer,
Had adjusted gross income under certain limits (\$12,200 for individual
or \$24,400 for married couples filing joint)



WHAT DO I NEED?

Instruct a person you trust to submit a Non-Filers Form at irs.gov/efile

Full name
Mailing address (not the facility where you are incarcerated)
Email address (create your own or use another that you have access to)
Date of birth
Social Security number
Drivers license number (optional)
Bank account and routing number (optional, check alternatives below)

WITHOUT A BANK ACCOUNT?

1. Set up a prepaid debit card like Bluebird by American Express or Meta Virtual Prepaid Visa Card. These cards will give you an account and routing number to use with the IRS, when you fill out your form. Here is where you can deposit your stimulus and other check.
2. Use a mobile payment service like CashApp or Chime where you'll receive a routing and account number that you can include on your form for direct deposit.
3. Have the monies deposited to the bank account of a person or organization that you trust to forward the payment to you.
4. Have a check mailed to your home mailing address and endorsed to someone you trust who can deposit the funds into your trust account.

DEADLINES TO SUBMIT

Due to the Coronavirus crisis the filing deadline for 2020 has been pushed back from April 15th to **July 15, 2020!**

Make sure to complete the form prior to the deadline in order to have your form reviewed for a stimulus check. After submitting the form, the IRS will take up to 48 hours to respond with a rejection or approval of the submission. Rejections can be resubmitted with revised or additional information needed for approval.



NEED HELP?

We will be hosting online information sessions every week beginning in May through the July deadline to help non-filers and preparers with submitting the simple 1040 form using the methods listed above.

Instruct your loved one to attend one of these sessions for help with submitting a form on your behalf or with submitting their own.

THESE ARE THE NATIONAL DEMANDS OF THE
MEN AND WOMEN IN FEDERAL, IMMIGRATION
AND STATE PRISONS:

#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth

- 1.Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.
- 2.An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
- 3.Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
- 4.Rescission of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.
- 5.An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.
- 6.An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.
- 7.No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.
- 8.State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.
- 9.Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories.
- 10.Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called "ex-felons." Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!

**CRISIS CREATES OPPORTUNITY
PRESSURE PROMOTES URGENCY**

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